

Back Injury Prevention

Back injuries often occur to those performing various home repairs. These can involve injuries to the spinal column, and strains or sprains to the muscles, tendons and ligaments of the back.

Lifting injuries aren't usually caused by picking up vehicle transmissions or 45 gallon drums. Instead, they frequently involve improper lifting of common smaller items.

Safe lifting procedures:

- Plan your route so you have a clear path to carry the item. Have a place to put the item down once you reach your destination.
- Check the weight of the item you will be lifting to see if you will need help. Do this by grasping the object firmly by an outside corner and tipping it towards you. You should be able to tell if it is too heavy.
- Use the proper devices for lifting and carrying. A dolly or hand cart may be better than lifting it yourself.
- Use teamwork. When you do a team lift, appoint one person as the leader who tells everyone else when to pick up the object and put it down.
- Bend your knees when you lift instead of stooping over. Hold your back straight and vertical to the ground. If you keep your head up, your eyes looking ahead and your stomach muscles tight, you will help yourself maintain this posture.
- Keep the item close to your body. Lifting or carrying an object at arm's length puts much more strain on your back.

Basic tips to avoid back injuries in general:

- Do warm-ups before any physical exertion.
- Avoid excessive bending, reaching or twisting motions.
- Stand up straight, but not rigid. Keep your knees flexed and maintain the natural curves in your back.
- When sitting, choose a comfortable, relaxed position in which your back is straight. Don't slouch.
- When lying down, keep your back curved naturally. Use a low pillow under your head and neck.
- Avoid sleeping on your stomach.
- Maintain physical fitness. Exercise to keep the muscles of your back and abdomen strong.

